

VZCZCXYZ0000  
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0553 0671339  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 081339Z MAR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3800  
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 5418  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1624  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAR 9711  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 0401  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 0057  
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

UNCLAS QUITO 000553

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: TWO ECUADORIAN JOURNALISTS KILLED

¶1. Summary: Press reported the murders of two journalists on February 13 and February 14 in and around the Guayaquil area. In both cases, no items were reported stolen and there have been no arrests. In one case, the reporter had previously spoken out about youth gangs during his radio reports, and may have been murdered as a reprisal. End Summary.

¶2. Jose Luis Leon Desiderio, 43, was found dead as a result of three gunshot wounds late on February 13, after leaving his home to meet his wife at the bus stop. Desiderio began his career began his journalism career 22 years ago working for the El Telegrafo newspaper. Recently, he had also worked for various radio stations, including Radio Minutera, where he had given editorials against youth gangs. On February 14, freelance photographer Raul Suarez Sandoval, was shot dead in Duran, southwest of Guayaquil. Suarez, who contributed to the La Hora Durandena and La Prensa de Duran newspapers, received four gunshot wounds reportedly after leaving a telephone booth.

¶3. On March 7 PolOff spoke with Hector Espin, president of the National Union of Journalists; Juan Centurion, president of the National Union of Journalists- Guayas chapter, and Cesar Duque, lawyer for human rights organization CEDHU, about the cases. Espin and Centurion believe the Desiderio murder could have been related to his commentaries about youth gangs and said Desiderio had received threatening phone calls. Both thought, however, that the Suarez case was only a case of attempted robbery. Duque thought it unlikely that the Desiderio murder was in response to his statements against youth gangs, as gang leaders would not likely be concerned with these comments.

Comment  
-----

¶4. Both murders occurred in high crime areas where these kinds of violent incidents are not uncommon. In the Desiderio case, we cannot rule out the possibility that he was murdered as a reprisal for his public commentary against youth gangs.  
JEWELL